

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 1047

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PO, PT

SUBJ: LISBON ATTITUDE TOWARD TIMOR

REF:(A) JAKARTA 1731

(B) STATE 40593

SUMMARY: CURRENT EMBASSY ASSESSMENT OF GOP REACTION TO GOI
FORCEABLE TAKEOVER OF TIMOR IS THAT GOP WILL NOT RESIST TAKE-
OVER AND WILL MAKE ONLY MILD PROTEST IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS
UNLESS CLEAR "THIRD WORLD" CONSENSUS DEVELOPS ON THE ISSUE.
END SUMMARY.

1. MAJOR METELLO, RANKING MILITARY MEMBER OF NATIONAL
DECOLONIZATION COMMISSION, INFORMED EMBOFF FEB. 19 THAT GOP
PLANS EVENTUALLY "CONSULT" WITH PEOPLE OF TIMOR TO DETERMINE
TERRITORY'S POLITICAL FUTURE. METELLO NOTED EXISTENCE OF THREE
TIMORESE POLITICAL MOVEMENTS AND SAID FRANEWORK TO FORMUALTE
TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT NOT YET ESTABLISHED. METELLO MENTIONED
TIMORESE POLITICAL UNPREPAREDNESS FOR PLEBESCITE OR REFERENDUM
AND SAID OPTIMUM PREPARATORY PERIOD PRIOR TO CONSULTATION WOULD
BE AT LEAST TWO YEARS. METELLO SAID GOP TO BEGIN "TIMORIZATION"
OF PORTUGUESE BUREAUCRACY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.HE POINTED
TO COMMERICAL EXPLOITATION BY CHINESE IN TIMOR AS PART OF COLONIAL
PROBLEM.

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2. METELLO SAID, HOWEVER, THAT GOP IS AWARE OF "GEOPOLITICAL REALITIES" IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, NAMELY INDONESIAN AND AUSTRALIAN INTERESTS, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ARMED TAKEOVER OF PORTUGUESE TIMOR BY INDONESIA. HE INDICATED THAT REALISTICALLY THERE WAS LITTLE PORTUGAL COULD DO IN THE CASE OF AN ARMED TAKEOVER. METELLO ASSUMES GOI FEARFUL OF CENTRIFUGAL FORCES WHICH WOULD SET IN MOTION BY PRESENCE OF INDEPENDENT NATION ON BORDERS OF MULTI-ETHNIC INDONESIA.

3. PORTUGUESE NAVY CHIEF OF STAFF PINHEIRO AZEVEDO AND AIR FORCE CHIEF OF STAFF MENDES DIAS, BOTH MEMBERS OF JUNTA, COUNCIL OF STATE, AND ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT SUPERIOR COUNCIL TOLD AMBASSADOR FEB. 24 THAT THERE WAS NOTHING PORTUGAL COULD DO ABOUT A GOI INVASION OF TIMOR. WHEN QUERIED ABOUT POSSIBLE RECOURSE TO THE UN, THEY JUST SHRUGGED THEIR SHOULDERS.

4. COMMENT: AMBASSADOR HAS REQUESTED APPOINTMENT WITH MINISTER FOR INTER-TERRITORIAL COORDINATION ALMEIDA SANTOS TO GET FURTHER REACTION ON TIMOR. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT ALMEIDA SANTOS IS LIKELY TO SHARE THE VIEWS OF HIS COLLEAGUE ON THE DECOLONIZATION COMMISSION. IN ANY CASE WHAT REALLY COUNTS IS THE ATTITUDE OF THE MILITARY. THERE IS LITTLE REASON TO DOUBT THAT THE ATTITUDE EXPRESSED BY ADM. AZEVEDO AND GENERAL MENDES DIAS REFLECTS THE VIEW OF THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT AND THE MILITARY HIGH COMMAND.

5. OUR ASSESSMENT AT THIS POINT IS THAT THE GOP WOULD DO NOTHING ABOUT A FORCEABLE TAKEOVER OF TIMOR AND PROBABLY WOULD LIMIT ITSELF TO PRO-FORMA PROTESTS, IF ANY, IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS.

6. THE UNKNOWN FACTOR IN THIS EQUATION IS HOW GOP WILL TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE "THIRD WORLD" OR "UNALIGNED" NATIONS' REACTION TO SUCH A TAKEOVER. WE, AT LEAST, ARE NOT AWARE OF WHAT THE THIRD WORLD POSITION IS OR MIGHT BE ON THIS ISSUE. WE DOUBT IF GOP IS EITHER. HOWEVER, GOP, BECAUSE OF ITS AFRICAN PROBLEMS, WILL DO WHAT IT CAN TO MAINTAIN GOOD THIRD WORLD RELATIONS. DEVELOPMENT OF A STRONG "THIRD WORLD" CONSENSUS ON TIMOR QUESTION COULD CONCEIVABLY LEAD TO MODIFICATION IN GOP'S RELAXED ATTITUDE TOWARD A GOI TAKEOVER
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